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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of :
Singleton :
Application No. 10/079,920 : DECISION
Filing Date: 20 February, 2002 :
Attorney Docket No. K047 1180.1 :
:

This is a decision on the petition filed on 15 February, 2005, alleging unintentional delay under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b).

For the reasons set forth below, the petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) is **GRANTED**.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the final Office action mailed on 12 July, 2004, with response due absent extension of time on or before 12 October, 2004;
- on 21 October, 2004, Petitioner filed (with a request and fee for extension of time) an

after-final amendment, which was not a proper reply to a final Office action¹ because it did not *prima facie* place the application in condition for allowance;

- the application went abandoned after midnight 12 November, 2004;
- it appears that the Office did not mail a Notice of Abandonment before the instant petition was filed, but the Examiner also mailed an Advisory Action on 28 January, 2005;
- on 15 February, 2005, Petitioner filed the instant petition and fee, the reply in the form of a request for continued examination, fee and submission in the form of the previously submitted after-final amendment, and made the statement of unintentional delay.

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).²

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority. The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.³

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.⁴ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁵

¹ The proper response to the final Office action (see: MPEP 711.03(c)) must be in the form of: (a) an amendment *prima facie* placing the application in condition for allowance; (b) a Notice of Appeal; or (c) a Continuing Application or Request for Continued Examination (RCE) (with fee and submission) under 37 C.F.R. §1.114.

² 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

³ Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

⁴ See: Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁵ See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁶ Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.⁷)

The requirements for a grantable petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) are the petition and fee, a showing of unintentional delay, a proper reply, and—where appropriate—a terminal disclaimer and fee.

Petitioner has satisfied the requirements of the regulation.

CONCLUSION

The instant petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) hereby is **granted**.

The instant application is released to Technology Center 2600 for further processing in due course.

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214.



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Office of Petitions

⁶ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra.

⁷ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.